Shirkers of the world unite !!

ARMCHAIR

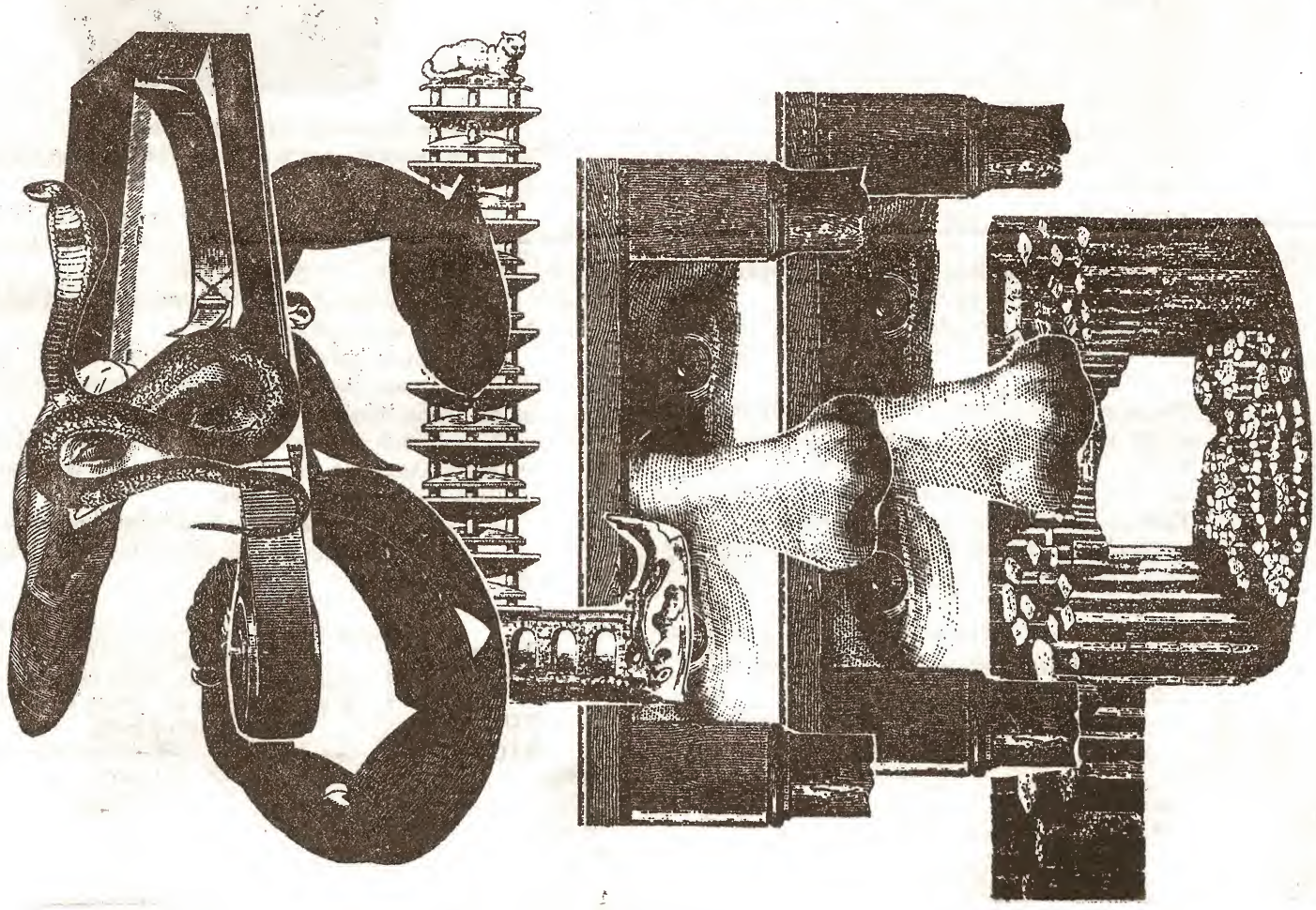
May 92
No 2

Devoid of consciousness of their own existence....

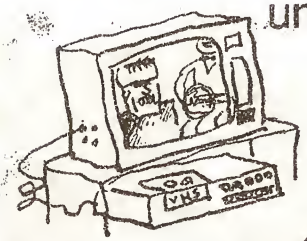
Numbed by the narcotics of consumerism....

Confined to their armchairs....

The proles are....



Shirkers of the world unite !!



ARMCHAIR

Introduction

ARMCHAIR is the personal ranting and raving of Erik the Vandal together with contributions from special guest stars Stevoid and the Institute of Fatuous Research. Like your favourite band was always doing better stuff in the old days compared to their new stuff, this ARMCHAIR isn't quite so wild and raunchy as the last one. Says Erik; "This is due to a severe attack of unenthusiasm and having my time diverted by such things as anti-electioneering." Now that the whole social scene is dominated by popular capitalism and the cult of commodities we have been accustoming ourselves to lounging around in a lethargic stupour as an expression of our current defeat. But this inactivity and immobility of the proles will ultimately be capitalism's downfall. ARMCHAIR is basically anticapitalist and antistate and in full agreement with the politically right on ideologically correct thought of proletarian dada-surrealism!!! The next ARMCHAIR might be out for oct '92. In the meantime send any comments, letters, articles, graphics, doodles etc. to...

ARMCHAIR, folder I9, 30 Silver St,
READING

Thanks to the following for their help with issue no. 2; Coral B, Greg, Arthur Moyse, Stevoid, O.J., Acknowledgements also to Buffo, Wildcat, Subversinn, ICP, Demolition Derby among others for ripped off material. +Anticlockwise for inspiration

ARMCHAIR is anticopyright to all good subversives who want to borrow material for revolutionary purposes.

The answer to ruling class power is social revolution

....And then Anita made Mama toto range
And Anita looked upon it and saw that it was expensive and this was good....

....And then Anita said, 'let there be a new kind of buisness' and this was done.

'This buisness should present all products in a 'tasteful' and 'natural' way' and this was so.

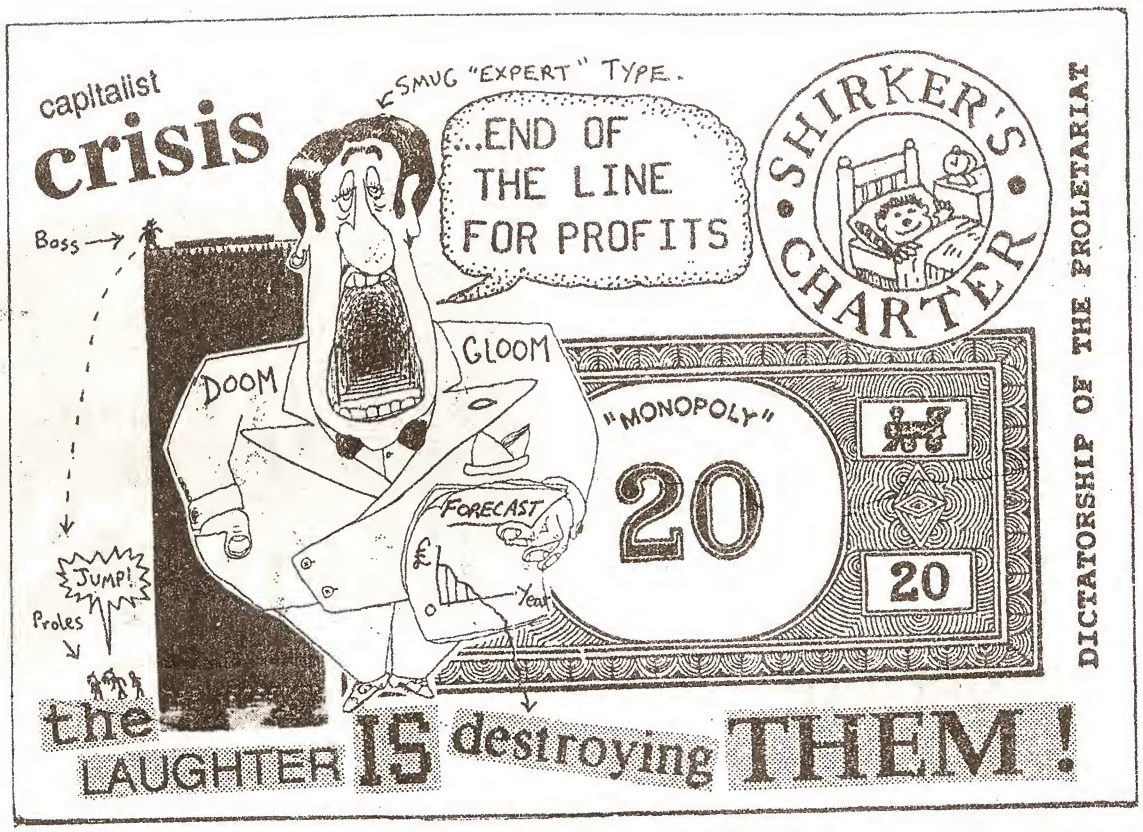
'Its workers should spout words like, 'values', 'soul' and 'rainforest' and these words were spoken indeed inscribed on the clothes those workers wore.

'Those workers shalt not see this kingdom Shoddy shop merely as a means to earn their crust, but as a temple of enlightenment'. This must be so.

'Thou shalt trade with our under-developed neighbours which will aid a millionaire life-style'. This was so with fruitful rewards.

Who are you kidding?

Trade not Revolution
= cheap labour, cash crops & production of trivia for western shoppers.



DOWN WITH RECOVERY!

Well, we at ARMCHAIR have been signing on the dole for a whole year now and we haven't seen a single "ladder of opportunity" to inspire us, what with the recession and everything. You might have thought with a capitalist recession grinding us down we'd be praying for an end to slump, for a "consumer led" recovery or for a Keynesian investment boost to get the wheels of production moving again. Far from it!

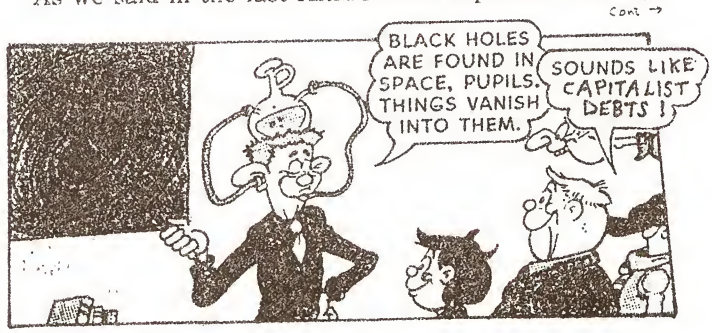
To the contrary, every time the miserable looking newsreader comes on the telly to announce the latest piece of "bad" economic news as capitalism slowly but inevitably continues to crumble bit by bit, I have a sneaky cheer. "The F.T. index fell twenty points today"...HOORAY! "Productivity has fallen and profits are down," ...BRILLIANT! Apparently the system is in the grip of a world property slump. According to one of the Sunday papers it is "...the worst for fifty years, there is no sign of an end to it, its repercussions go well beyond house prices and mortgages. The longer it continues, the more it eats into the financial fabric of the economy and undermines the high street banks" ...WAHAY! ...LOVE IT! So now world capitalism is imploding and we can read all about it in the Sunday colour supplements and watch it on telly while having a lie in in bed. As Stalinoid miners union hack Arthur Scarface once didn't say "The shirkers only have to fail to flex their muscles and capitalism is brought to its knees."

So why are we cynically laughing in the middle of all this misery and suffering. Surely recovery, the "upturn in the economy" those nice smiling politicians have all been promising us in their election manifestos, is what we all need? Well what they mean by "recovery" is recovery for capitalism, recovery for the rich and powerful and their system. It doesn't mean recovery for <u>us</u>. Indeed "recovery" means attacks against us will intensify as capitalism regains its strength to push us down! After the recession in '81 unemployment kept rising well up to '86/87 long after "recovery" (one of the reasons it fell was because naughty Nigel Lawson overspent and "overheated" the economy in the late eighties, a mistake the system is unlikely to make again). Unemployment is not going to fall with any new recovery but will continue to rise. And it will be pushed up as a <u>deliberate</u> part of a capitalist recovery. Now we at ARMCHAIR are not complaining about increases in relaxation and shirking time. We have no intention of fighting for the "right" to be beaten up by an alarm clock every Monday morning so we can all trudge off to some depressing place of employment. What we do complain about is the isolation, powerlessness and poverty that unemployment imposes under this present system and the knock on fear that causes for those still in jobs.

Recession in the capitalist economy is caused in part by the class struggle, workers' resistance to work, rising real wages for those in jobs and a rising social wage for those outside jobs. But the recession is turned round by the system and used as a weapon to counter attack and clamp down on the struggle. With the usual bag of austerity tricks, the threat of redundancy/unemployment higher mortgages and so on, the capitalists can reimpose discipline in their economy and encourage us to behave ourselves. What is referred to as "recovery" is when this counter attack bears fruit, profitability is restored and it's back to exploitation as normal. None of this is in our interest of course.

As we said in the last ARMCHAIR capitalist recovery

Cont →



doesn't mean the wealth will be "trickling down" to us and we'll all be booming with prosperity. It means instead that we can look forward to more traffic on the roads to run us over, loads of new roads to be run over on! (where did the landscape go?), more expensive yuppy wine bars to be thrown out of, more opportunities to go mad working in neurotic office jobs (if you're not still on the dole), more funny farm "toytown" houses to get depressed in, more bland commodities to make us puke up... To hell with prosperity! The much awaited recovery in the housing market will lead to a jump in the cost of living space and housing. So if you "get on your bike" and you manage to find "work!" large chunks of anything you earn will be snatched off you straight away in the form of extortionate accommodation costs. Again this is what happened with "recovery" in the mid eighties after the last recession. Also it is no coincidence that at the same time they are trying to manipulate a recovery in the housing market they are planning a big clamp down on squatting.

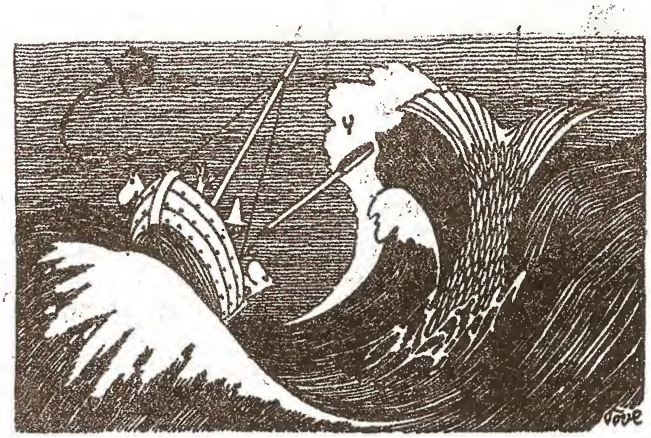
CONSUME

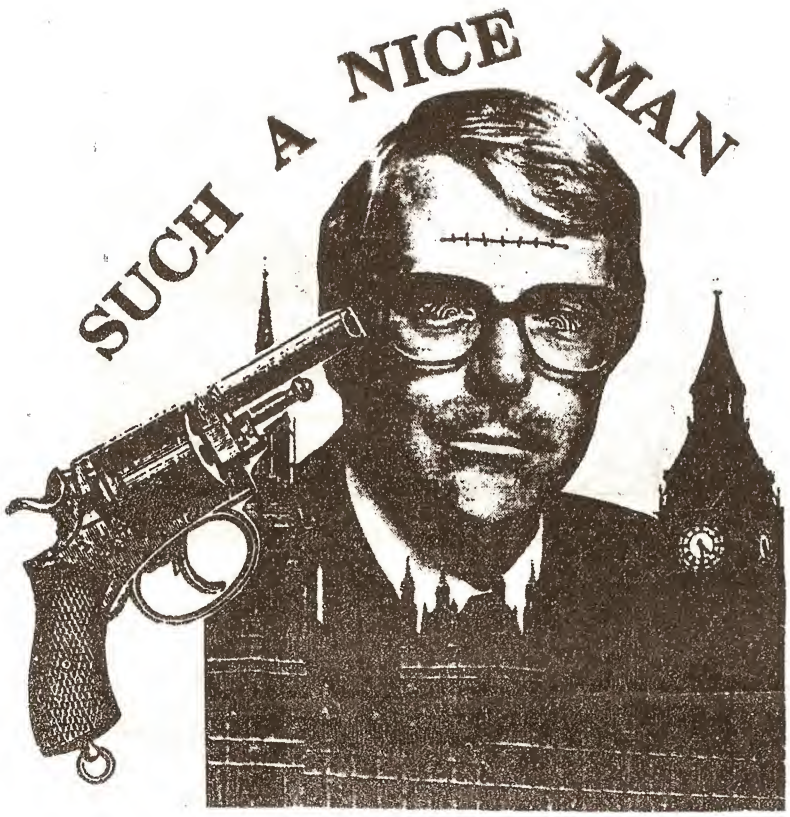
An interesting phenomena during this current recession has been the problem the system has been having trying to start a "consumer led" recovery and get the happy shoppers actively pushing their trolleys again. Despite the fact we are supposed to be in a slump, the majority of those in regular employment have been able to keep their wages rising above the rate of inflation and they have a lot of money in their pockets to spend. But people just don't seem to have wanted to buy anything not even the cheapest cut price consumer items on offer! Part of it has been people concentrating on trying to pay off debts. But there has been almost an air of defiance against spending money on anything, like a mass consumer strike. It is like a game of dare to see who can hold on to their pocket money the longest before they cave in and grudgingly buy something. Immediately after the election result there was a big attempt to hype a mood of economic optimism and restore confidence, share prices jumped. But this might just be a house of cards, people feel "confident" just because everyone else is "confident" simply because they expected to feel confident with a Tory win. But this doesn't mean there is any real material basis for imminent "recovery", a lot of this "confidence" could easily collapse again. Just because Mr Major is such a "nice man" it doesn't mean that capitalism is saved!

DOWN WITH TOYTOWN

On the local front the dole office here in toytown still has big crowds and is doing good business, although they've opened a few new windows and spread our times around to ease the crush in the queues. It's becoming quite a social occasion these days with this particular recession's regulars getting to know each other as they queue up each fortnight. A growing number are even turning up early so they can hang around and have a good chat before the bar opens... I mean before the windows open! We haven't spotted the "citizens charter" in the office yet though. No sign yet of the charter that will give us a correct procedure for banging on the counter and calling the U.B.O. clerks rude names (but unfortunately the charter fails to make our giros any bigger). Squatting continues but only just. The "will they or won't they" uncertainty about the proposed possible criminalisation is a deliberate part of the softening up process. Also there have been murmurs of rent strikes by various council tenants over local disagreements, repairs etc, with the council. The Poll Tax situation appears to be quiet at the moment. The Labour council made threats about wheel clamping cars of non payers at the start of the election campaign in a pathetic cynical attempt to attract those respectable law abiding petty bourgeois floating voters. Yes, you know... the ones who always vote Tory in the end (Labour failed to win the seat, ha! ha!). As far as we know, no one has actually been clamped in this area so far. There are still loads of empty shop premises in the town centre and the place looks more flyposted than ever. No sign yet of a new heavy wave of gentrification. Everybody here is planning on moving up north to seek their fortune and find a new life.

We say that if the economy wants to gaga then let it go gaga, and it can flush itself down the loo in the process (and isn't the word "economy" just a codeword for capitalism). We shouldn't allow ourselves to get fooled a second time and buy the same lie that was sold to us in the eighties. We were told that if we got on our bikes, worked hard in our jobs, scrambled onto the first rung of the home ownership ladder and thought greedily only of ourselves then it would be a life of never ending prosperity for us all. But the capitalist bubble always bursts in the end, every boom is followed by a slump. We don't want recovery, what we want is REVOLUTION!





I don't think there is any point in me coming out with the usual anarko moan and winge about how boring the TV election coverage was. This only lets the cat out of the bag as to how much one was secretly watching it all... ahem! Anyway we can't exactly expect them to make it an exciting and joyful occasion for us all, that is not the way power works. No, the way power works is to waste our time falsely building up our hopes that maybe things are getting just a little bit nicer and then it blows a big nasty raspberry in our face to knock us down again.

It was all a con of course, "bah humbug!" somebody in Hammersmith once said. It's a funny old world. The election had us all fooled, myself included, salivating at the prospect of a hung parliament, constitutional crisis and an end to our way of life as we know it. We were all fantasizing about being the messianic visionary leader with the correctest brilliantest revolutionary strategy to seize power in the midst of this power vacuum. We all went to our bookshelves to dust off our copies of Machiavelli and consult the relevant devious chapters in the D.I.Y. guide on how to bump off our adversaries, become head of state and get home in time for tea. But it was not to be, we didn't vote but we still had illusions, the world still looked just the same on Friday morning as it did on Thursday morning and it was tweedledum in power as usual instead of tweedledee.

It was all a conspiracy I tell you! The opinion polls were basically rigged and released at specific calculated moments. This was either to boost one or other of the parties or, more in line with the overall interests of the spectacle, to boost the idea of a "neck and neck" contest so the tension would be raised and our attention would be pulled more and more into the election. The funny thing about all these polls and statistics is, despite all the hitech computers and modern survey compiling methods, they are becoming more and more unreliable and meaningless. This is because they are becoming more tied up with the promotional aims of all the various interest groups in the market place.

Purely objective information about the capitalist system is increasingly hard to come by these days. A survey on "business confidence" for instance when publicised will itself have an affect on things like share prices or commodity prices. When businesses supply their information for such surveys the information they supply will be distorted by their own interest in pushing the price of certain shares or commodities up or down. The organisation compiling the survey or poll will then have its own interests for compiling this survey and releasing its "findings" (i.e. plantings) at a particular time. That means that when the system looks at itself it does so in a warped false mirror so it no longer knows where it has come from, where it is, or make any really accurate predictions about where it is actually going. Capitalism is tripping, it is no longer in control of itself, it just has to hold on and hope for the best. "Once the running of a state involves a permanent and massive shortage of historical knowledge, that state can no longer be led strategically." (Guy Debord)

The role of the media in examining the policies of each of the candidates and parties is in reality a process of bringing the population on to the ground which is safe for capitalism. There certainly aren't any big debates in the T.V. studios about demands for expropriating the land and resources, getting rid of the owners, getting rid of the dictatorship of money in our lives, abolishing wage slavery and commodity alienation, reducing the level of necessary work and creating a community of play and creativity: that would be far too much for the bourgeoisie to tolerate. Much too "investigative" for the bosses indeed!

A VERY NICE MAN

The ruling class is desperate in trying to involve the working class in all the debates on the future of the capitalist economy to help keep capitalism going. Even better if they can get the working class to passionately take up some of the issues against other sections of their own class. If they can disorientate whole sections of workers by getting them to demand policies which are in the interests of sections of the ruling class well that is a bonus for the bosses, that is why the elections are important for the ruling class at this time.

Despite everything that's happened over the last decade and more the trots every election still come out

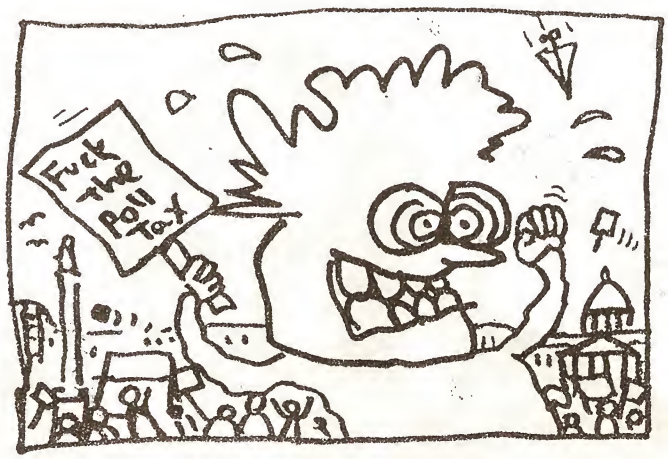
with the same crap slogans: Grovel to the Labour party and build the miserable state capitalist alternative!... Prince Charles to power on a socialist platform!... For a socialist Tory government!... Down with cracks in the paving stones kick the Tories out!... Down with cold weather kick the Tories out! It makes you want to vote Tory! Well, OK, maybe Liberal Democrat.

"Democracy" is just another word for homelessness and price rises.

Every election since the beginning of the eighties I've supported the anarko "Anti-election campaign". But apart from being an excuse to do something and make a tiny bit of noise I'm not sure an "anti-election campaign" can really ever succeed in doing anything. Obviously they fight the bourgeois parliamentary election on the parliamentary systems own terms, they make "the election" to be the issue. But it isn't just that, they can also be patronising. Shouting through a megaphone at people "Don't vote!" can be just as patronising as shouting "vote for so and so!". It is an alienated approach to politics, preaching to "get a message across" to the general public rather than propagandise amongst those sections of the population that have an interest in struggle. We were all paranoid and expecting to get massacred on the banned anti-election demo on April 4th in Trafalgar Square that had been organised by an alliance of various anarchist and communist groups. But the police had more intelligence than to give us an opportunity to earn 3 ½ seconds worth of free publicity by stirring up a kerfuffle and arresting everyone (about 500 turned up). The demo was dull, contained, inhibited, basically diffused apart from a few rowdy speeches. But most of the containment and repression was self imposed in a stuffy semi religious politico ritual. I don't think anyone noticed apart from a few tourists. I've long held the theory that politics is just an expensive way of going to the pub.

A VERY VERY NICE MAN

The "classless society" that John Major talks of creating is a society where the capitalist class dominates society to such an extent that we all end up living our lives in the image of the capitalists, even losing consciousness of our own existance and falsely imagining that we are all capitalists too. Democracy is the dictatorship of the consumers. The "democratic majority" is in fact 30-40% of the electorate, the comfortable "middle sectors", who have allied themselves to the mega-rich 3% who own the wealth that really counts, and are trampling over everyone else. Liberal democracy is merely the political wing of the capitalist market, nothing else, P.R. would be its finest expression!



"Poll Tax riots?... Ah those were the days!"

Life today is getting downright worrying. There is a growing mood of downright defeat as far as proletarians are concerned. It seems like no big central struggle or big fight, like a major strike, uprising or confrontational issue to fan the flames of class based revolt, has happened in this part of the world for ages. Poll Tax riots?... Ah those were the days! It all feels like ancient history now: "Mummy, Daddy, what did you do in the great Poll Tax revolt?" Although Poll Tax debt resistance is still a little bit of a problem for them. Unemployment and housing are also areas which might see further struggles.

Down with the dictatorship of the normal respectable grey suited "nice people" on TV. Down with the dictatorship of the bourgeois happy shoppers and their overloaded shopping trolleys. Death to democracy and popular capitalism. ERIK '92

DON'T VOTE....

Revolt!

democracy is a farce

MENACE

As the orgy of nationalist stupidity approaches its climax, there has never been a better time to reappropriate the word sovereignty. Never has a need for autonomy been more painfully urgent than it is today. But now that Capital and the State occupy almost all the terrain, our minds have become the only space that is usually left. The power of the bosses, and bureaucrats of the present and future States is awesome and undeniable. But for us, these institutions have no legitimacy and will have none in the future State. A dream (a nightmare, really) as empty and boring as creating a State merits nothing but contempt. We spit on your flags and your nationalist symbols. We have no country and want none. All States must die, and any State that happens to be born should be dispatched as quickly as possible. It is a public secret that whatever the result of the present nationalist frenzy, *nothing is really going to change*. There is not even the pretence of a vision of something different which existed in the nationalist wave of the sixties and seventies, although this "vision" ultimately only consisted of counter-culturalisms and recycled leftist capitalisms. Everybody knows that this time we're going to end up with some absurd mediocrity, some hideous monstrosity. The reigning political idiocy enrages us. Today, worldwide, everything conspires towards a numbing passivity and domestication — our response is to learn to let our passions erupt!

PATRIOTS OF ALL COUNTRIES SHOOT YOURSELVES!

PROLETARIANS OF PLANET EARTH UNITE!

the DAILY Fatuousness

anytime FORWARD WITH TOYTOWN 10p

Let's go free market wild

THANK GOD YOUR STILL SHOPPING!

'Carry on shopping' that was the message yesterday as the government revealed its latest plans for mass cretinization. Shopping malls are to be open 24 hours a day every day and credit cards will now be available to under 5's. In addition to this, each time you go shopping you will be required by law to buy something (Police have new powers to arrest anyone found not to be carrying purchased goods whilst walking within a shopping area of the city, and shoplifters can expect to receive life imprisonment). A packed press conference was told by the Minister for Disinformation, the Right Priced Nell Sainsbury MP, that 'increased consumerism is the only way to keep this country on its feet'. On behalf of the government he thanked Happy Shoppers everywhere and said that it was their dedication to commodity fetishism that would ensure that Britain remained a leading power in the global rat-race.

Roy Tescoe, the Minister for Education, revealed that Free-Market Studies would now be part of the National Syllabus, and that school children would be expected to have personal business-plans by the age of 12. 'We must must learn to sell ourselves at an earlier age' he said.

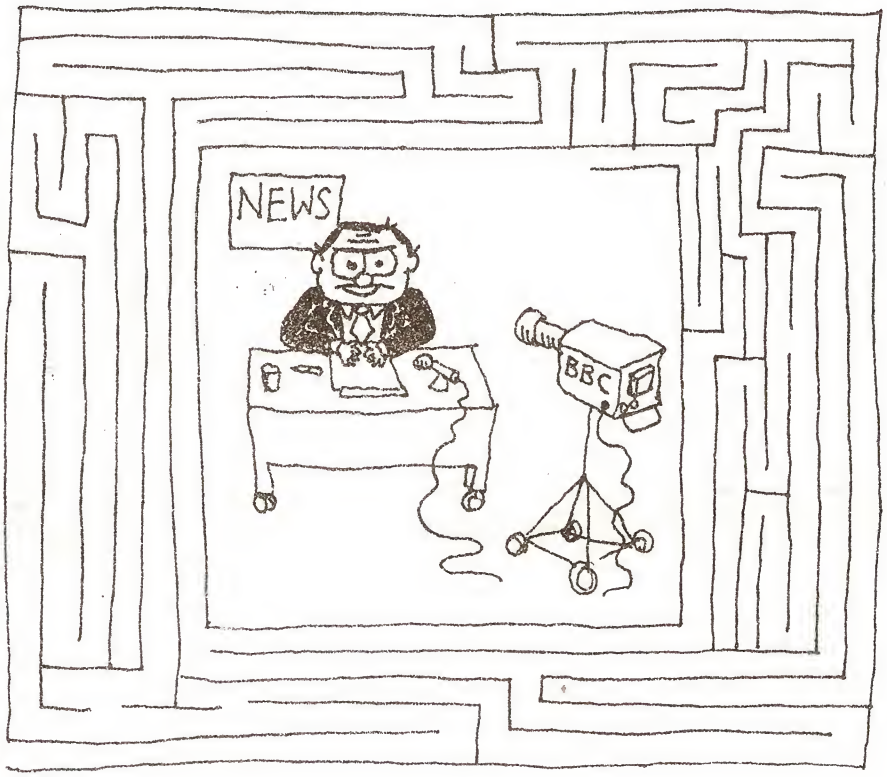
FATUOUS COMMENT

WORK, WORK, WORK, WORK, WORK!

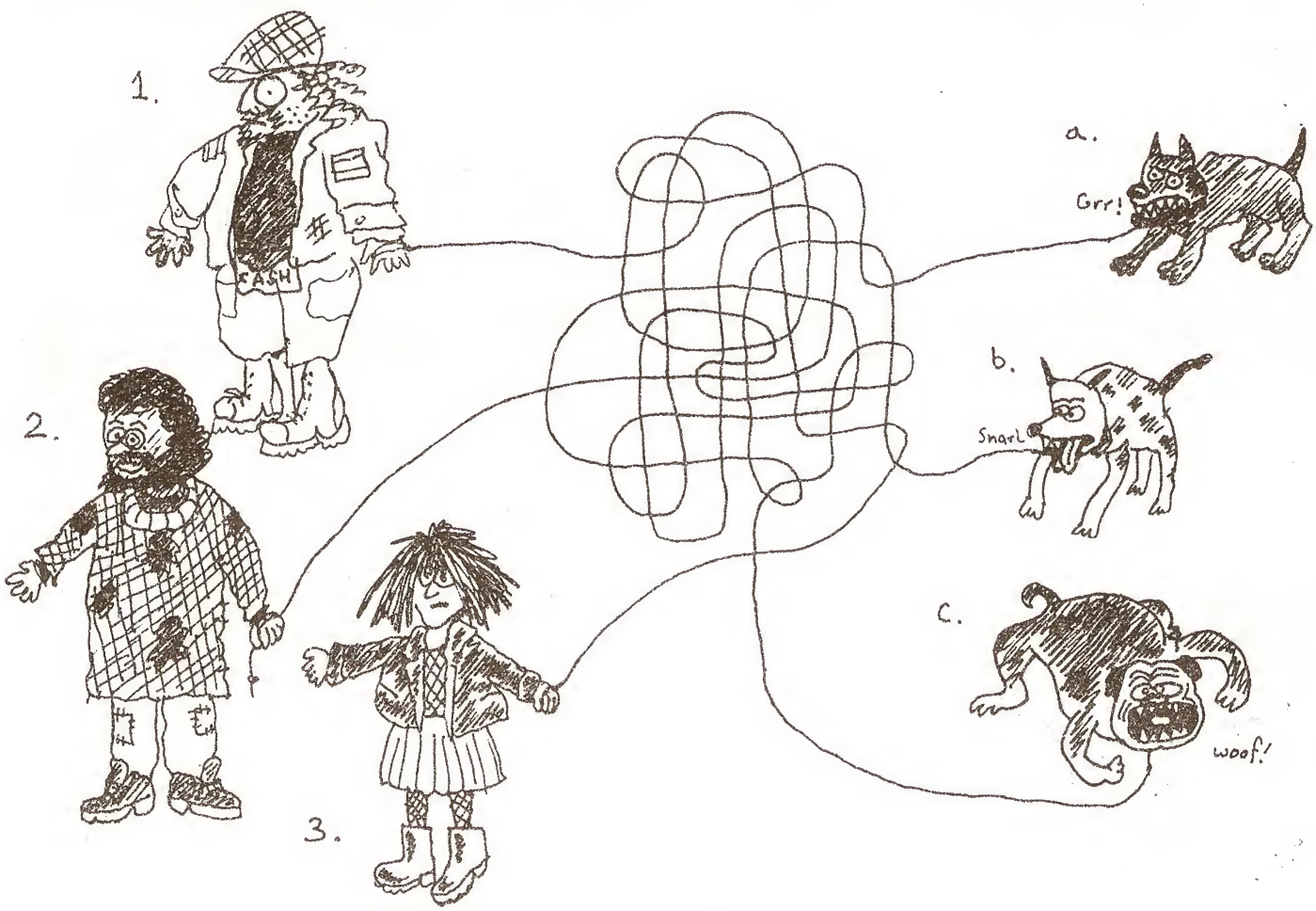
STOLEN FROM "FATUOUS TIMES"

PUZZLE CORNER

1 A group of situationist revolutionaries has invaded the television centre to disrupt normal T.V. viewing, attack the commodity and media spectacles and demand social revolution. Can you help them find the news room?...



2 Which stereotyped Hackney Squatter is attached to which dog ???



The Smug Little Bastard does it DEMOCRATICALLY

A short story

Once upon a time somewhere in another galaxy there was a funny little planet called Threebee, and on this planet lived an odd bunch known as the Threebeez.

Not much existed on planet Threebee apart from some telescopes and binoculars somebody had built. The Threebeez spent most of their time looking through these telescopes and binoculars staring out into space. As well as the telescopes and binoculars there was also a small prison hut, but the Threebeez hardly ever used it as they were usually too busy stargazing and peacefully coexisting to do anything seriously antisocial or criminal.

Every once in a while, for no particular reason, various objects would float through space and gently land somewhere on the surface of the planet. The Threebeez would watch out for these objects with their telescopes and binoculars and see where they landed. When one of the Threebeez had spotted an object, it was normal for them to tell the rest so everybody could share the thing and put it to good use.

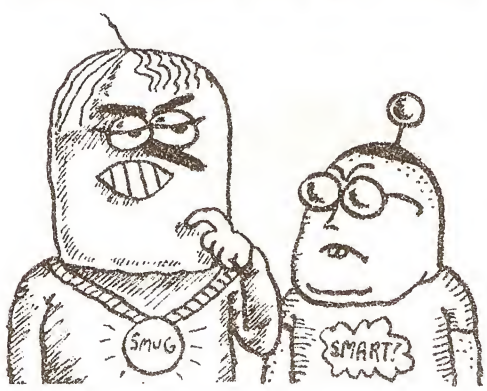
For instance, on one occasion Little Max told everyone he had spotted a giant bag of jelly beans that had landed slap bang in the middle of the great south crater! The jelly beans were shared out and for the next two days the Threebeez fell around stuffing themselves silly holding a jelly bean eating orgy. On another occasion Bridget the atom-smasher caught sight of a freezer full of strawberry mousse that descended just west of the green blob mountain range! The tubs were all emptied into a hole and for the next three days the Threebeez wallowed around in a strawberry mousse lake bathing and eating at the same time!

One day one of the Threebeez, a rather miserable character called Smug Little Bastard, decided he had had enough of all this sharing things out and engaging in sociable fun.

"Psst," he called over to another miserable character called Smart Little Fart, "You know all of this anarchy and chaos just isn't good enough. I think you and me are a cut above the rest, we're a better class of Threebee, we deserve something better than the others."

"I agree." said Smart Little Fart.

"I've got an idea." said Smug Little Bastard. "The next time we spot something approaching Threebee we should keep our mouths shut and tell no one, then when it lands we should keep it all to ourselves and not let the rest have any of it."



"Brilliant idea!" replied Smart Little Fart.

So they carried on watching out into space and waited for something to happen. Several days later Smug Little Bastard spotted a cluster of distant objects near the horizon. As they slowly approached he could make out what they were. It was a sofa!... together with a TV set and a video! And not only that, the video was showing "George Formby meets Frankenstein's Aunt" Smug Little Bastard's favourite film.

"Nobody else is getting any of this," thought Smug Little Bastard greedily to himself, "it's all mine!"

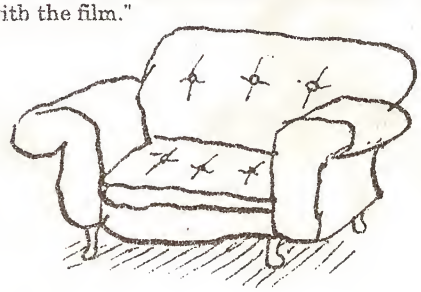
When the sofa and the video finally landed Smug Little Bastard and Smart Little Fart kept their mouths shut and ran over to where they were. They proceeded to grab them for themselves. However the problem with Threebee was that the surface was basically a blank landscape, there weren't that many walls and buildings and fences to hide and conceal things behind. So it wasn't long before the rest of the Threebeez spotted what was going on. They crowded round and demanded to know what was happening.

"We've decided to claim this video and sofa as our property," snorted Smug Little Bastard. "We spotted them first, and anyway we reckon we're better than you lot so we deserve something special. These things are for us only and you lot can buzz off!"

"You can't do that!" complained Mr Merz, "Just because you spotted them first it doesn't mean they belong only to you. You don't need them and it's not fair for you to hog them. Anyway, if you don't share them with us we'll just jump onto the sofa and push you off, so then you won't get any of it at all!"

As they were surrounded and outnumbered Smug Little Bastard and Smart Little Fart realized they were in a sticky situation. Smug thought a bit and then whispered into Smart's ear, a sneaky look came onto Smart's face.

"OK, OK..." said Smug, "we give in. You can share the sofa and the video with us. But, mind you, we must do this sensibly and carefully, there isn't much room on this sofa. We mustn't have anarchy, that would wreck everything. Now if everybody does this in an orderly fashion we can get on with the film."



The rest of the Threebeez cheered and proceeded to dive onto the sofa in a wild bundle. Some were pushing and shoving, some were blocking the view and others were damaging the sofa by trampling all over it.

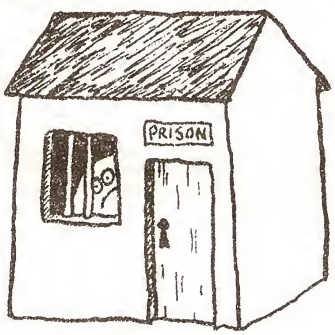
"WAIT!..." shouted Molotov Molly, "This really won't do. How can I watch the film while some individuals are pushing and shoving, it's really quite annoying you know, it's spoiling the film. I demand it stops! I think we are going to have to work out a spontaneous compromise on this."

"Spontaneous compromise? What nonsense is this!" interrupted Smug Little Bastard, "If everything was spontaneous everything would go amiss. We can't have disorder and wild anarchy. No, we must do this in an orderly manner, we must do this..." and a wily tone began to creep into his voice, "we must do this... DEMOCRATICALLY!"

"We must take a vote on it, all those who think that the pushers and shovers must be stopped vote now." The eight Threebeez who were sitting reasonably still outvoted the three who were the main cause of the rumpus. Smug frowned at the pushers and then continued.

"Shame on you, pushing and shoving like that. You're nothing but anti social delinquents and you must be punished. You've been outvoted eight to three and by the authority of the majority you must go to prison!"

The three guilty ones looked glum and shuffled off to the prison hut where they locked themselves in. How they managed to do this however, is unclear as the lock was on the outside.



"They can't complain," said Smug, "it was all done legitimately and in accordance with the rule of law... it was all done DEMOCRATICALLY. Right, now that's sorted out, we can get on with the film."

"WAIT!... shouted Little Max, "This is no good at all. Some individuals have got big hairdos and they're blocking our view of the screen. They're spoiling everyone's fun, I demand it stops! Before we go on we are going to have to sort this out and reach some informal arrangement."

"Informal arrangement? What nonsense is this!" interrupted Smug Little Bastard. "If everything was an informal arrangement everything would just collapse. We can't have anarchy and mayhem. No, we must do this DEMOCRATICALLY!"

"Let's take a vote on it, all those who think the ones with big hairdos should be stopped vote now." The five Threebeez who had shortish hair outvoted the three who had big hairdos. Smug glared at the three with big hairdos.

"Shame on you, blocking out everyone's view of the telly. Your hairdos are grossly offensive. You're nothing but wicked evil-doers and villains and you must be punished. You've been outvoted five to three and by the authority of the majority you must go to prison!"

The three with big hairdos looked glum and trudged off to the prison where they joined the pushers and shovers.

"They can't grumble," said Smug, "it was all done legitimately and in accordance with the rule of law... it was all done DEMOCRATICALLY. Right now that's sorted out, we can get on with the film."

"WAIT!..." shouted Gertrude, "this just won't do. Some individuals are wearing big hobnail boots and they are trampling all over the sofa tearing it to shreds, it's most disturbing. I can't concentrate on the film, something must be done about it. We will have to have an instant agreement on this."

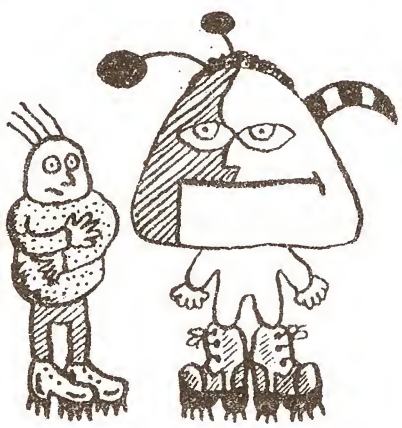
"Instant agreement? What nonsense is this!" interrupted Smug Little Bastard. "If everything was an instant agreement everything would be a disastrous muddle. We can't have mindless anarchy and chaos. No, we must do this DEMOCRATICALLY!"

"Let's take a vote on it, all those who think the ones with hobnail boots should be stopped vote now." The three with ordinary shoes outvoted the two with hobnail boots. Smug stared at the big booted tramplers.

"Shame on you, tearing up our sofa with your hobnail shoes. This is an awful outrage. You're nothing but violent criminals. You must be punished. You've been outvoted three to two and by the authority of the majority you must go to prison!"

The booted tramplers looked glum and trampled off to the prison where they joined the pushers and shovers and the ones with big hairdos.

"There's no point in them moaning," said Smug, "it was all done legitimately and in accordance with the rule of law... it was all done DEMOCRATICALLY. Right, now that's sorted out, we can get on with the film."



"Ahem... excuse me a minute," said Smart Little Fart, "somebody round here is wearing Eau de Sewage System Cologne, it's a most disturbing odour, and it's not me. It's ruining the film, I think we should have a vote about this too."

"That's odd," said Gertrude, "I've always worn it and nobody has complained before."

Smug and Smart raised their hands and outvoted Gertrude two to one, Smug looked menacingly at Gertrude.

"Shame on you, you miserable terrorist! How dare you offend our nostrils with your pong. You are a dangerous threat to civilisation and our whole way of life as we know it. You've been outvoted two to one so by the authority of the majority off you go to prison!"

Gertrude looked glummer than glum and walked slowly to the prison where she joined the pushers and shovers, the ones with big hairdos and the big booted tramplers.

"Ha Ha! our clever plan has worked!" laughed Smart Little Fart. "We've got rid of that lot, and now the video and sofa is all for us!"

Smug waited a while, then a wicked grin spread across his face. "Us?... who said anything about... us?"

"Er... what do you mean?" asked Smart.

"All's queer except thee 'n me, Smart. But recently I've been thinking even thee is a bit queer. Perhaps you too should spend some time in prison."

Smart looked nervous and began to sweat. "Now look here, you can't take that tone of voice with me, we had a special deal remember. Anyway, you haven't got the authority to send me to prison. There is only two of us left, we've only got one vote each and you can't form a democratic majority with only one vote! Ha! there, I have caught you out, what do you say to that Smug?"

"I say that for all your smartness, you just aren't smart enough. As I am chairthreebee of the proceedings here, due of course to my natural position on the sofa, not only do I have my own personal vote I also have a casting vote! So you see, I outvote you by two votes to one, and I say you go to prison!"

Smart Little Fart looked most peeved and he sulked off to the prison where he joined the rest of the population of Threebee minus one.

Cont.→

Smug was feeling smug. Smug was feeling very smug indeed. Hadn't he said the sofa and video was all his? and now he had proved it. But it had all been done legitimately and constitutionally. It had all been fair and in accordance with the rule of law... it had all been done DEMOCRATICALLY! Smug was the smuggest of them all!

But by now conditions at the prison hut were getting dangerously overcrowded as you can well imagine. Everyone was treading on each others toes and there was hardly any room to breath! It was pandemonium. As the pressure built up, the hut started creaking and groaning and bulging at the seams. Suddenly the whole thing exploded, the roof blew off and the Threebeez piled out in a heap.

The roof flew through the air at high speed in a great arc. As it flew through the air it made a high pitched whistling sound like a cannon shell which grew louder as it fell towards the surface. Crash! it landed right on top of Smug Little Bastard and squashed him, the sofa and the video into the ground.

"Phew! thank goodness that is all over, no more DEMOCRACY ever again." Said Little Max.

Just then another distant object appeared out in space, it floated gently down to the planet and landed about half a mile away. Bridget the atom-smasher got her binoculars out and looked to see what it was. It was... it was a great big pile of money.

"Oh no," she said, "now the trouble is really going to start!"

Paul

MEGA SALES DRIVE

MEGA SALES DRIVE

Computer games made by Sega and Nintendo were the biggest selling toys last xmas. These games are now so pervasive that Nintendo's character "Mario" can advertise pizza on British TV, is better known amongst American kids than Mickey Mouse or George Bush and is soon to be the subject of a film starring Danny De Vito. What the fuck is happening?!

One of the causes of the games' success is just that old favourite; fashion. The continuous hyping of the toy along with people's desperate attempts to try and feel "part of something", together cause a snowball effect with (for a limited period only) ever more people buying. Obviously in a situation like this the market soon becomes saturated. The media which previously 'hyped a particular product now tells us it is old hat or second rate and we must go out and buy the latest hyped product. Manufacturers plan ahead for this sort of trick e.g. when Sega replaced their Master System with the newer Mega Drive the games for the new system could not be played on the old. New systems will continue to be introduced every couple of years. This encourages you to fork out for a new console or expensive converter every few years, and so keep profits rolling in. It is a straight forward con.

Fashion is a dead weight on our backs. Many people don't have the money to keep up with it even if they want to, and so feel excluded. Others feel they have to buy so as not to be the odd one out, even if they can't really afford it. Everyone who buys the hyped product is disappointed to find that the product isn't the life fulfilling prize they at least half thought it might be. Fashion and hype sometimes have strange results. For example, they have made the Nintendo Game Boy the most popular console on the market. This is a prime case of "emperor's new clothes syndrome", in which people believe what everyone else believes rather than what their own eyes tell them. What I mean by this is that the Game Boy is obvious crud, with a crappy little monochrome screen. If an arcade game had graphics this bad nowadays, no one would play it!! Having said this though, all the consoles are pretty poor in one way or another. For instance Sega's Game Gear uses up so much power that the batteries can run out before it is possible to win some of the games! Another drawback with the hardware is that all the consoles use either cartridges or CDs rather than maghetic discs, which means that the games can't be copied. But there are problems more fundamental than this. The consoles are obviously much less versatile than a real computer. These can be used not just for permitted purposes, such as gaming, but also for such things as hacking where users can sabotage company records or even delete their own phone bill. Even with a machine like the Nintendo E.S. which can be used over the phone, the way the machine is designed makes it impossible to do anything illegal with it; it just is not versatile enough. You can't use the console for hacking, instead you can be given the choice to trade shares using it; in other words play games with people's lives.

The games themselves are in any case pretty dodgy. Despite the superficial complexity of some of them, all the games on all the systems give only a very limited scope for improvisation. When you play the games you are following a set of procedures set down previously by some middle class computer programmer working for one or other multi-national. In this sense the consoles are a vehicle for the colonisation of large numbers of minds by a (relatively speaking) tiny group of professionals. And the ideas they are actually putting across are pretty scummy too. For instance an American study found that out of the 36 top-selling non-sport Nintendo games, 13 had as a theme the murder or abduction of women. Other games are based on the exploits of murderous gangs such as the Nicaraguan contras and the US SEALS (commandos), both of which are involved in random terrorism and the torture and murder of rebels.

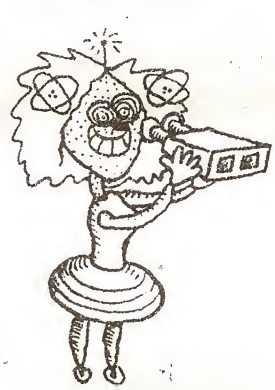
But even where the games aren't based on some form of atrocity there is still the vampiric effect of the games. Even if you haven't done it yourself,

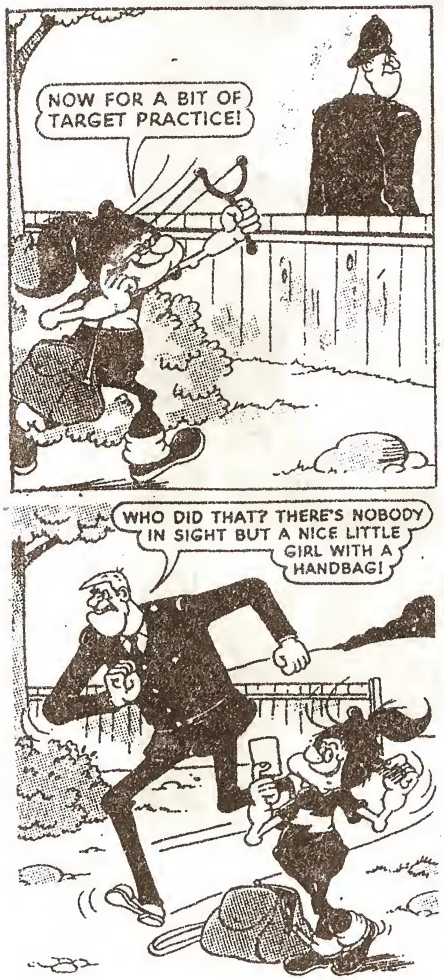
everyone knows someone who has spent some stupidly long session playing console games. This is such an amazing waste of time (one of the only worthwile things that most of us own); usually spent alone and in a trance like state. I know people who have played a particular game hours on end and then not been able to recall the colours of the character they've been staring at the whole time. These games capture both kids and adults and bind them to the screen. People who might find just sitting staring at TV too boring can now sit and stare at a screen and press buttons too! This is the worst aspect of these machines: that they are a more efficient and effective way of turning potentially active and rebellious people into hyper-passive, alienated half-zombies, at least temporarily.

The Game Boy TV advert helps create an image of activity beyond the tiny movements of the thumb needed to operate the toy. Giving the console the name "Game Boy" makes it clear they are talking about sex (baby). And in case that wasn't obvious enough, the advert shows a brief shot of a woman who has been rolling around in the hay with her Game Boy. Another shot shows several Game Boys shoved into a woman's bikini bottom. These pathetic attempts to link electronic toys with sexual activity make it obvious that adolescents (rather than younger kids only) are a main target of the campaign. It's worthwhile noting that the link between sex and the consoles is implied, almost subliminally, rather than stated openly. The reason for this is that if they claimed outright there was such a connection, we'd all laugh our heads off!

Some concerned journalists have voiced their worries about the violence of many of the games. The number of people playing these vicious fantasy games must be huge. But if it is a journalist's job to highlight potential social problems, it is the state's job to deal with them. It is interesting to see that whereas ninjutsu is now illegal in the UK, there is no problem in selling games in which you can fantasise this violent martial art. Sega even give their ninja game "Shinobi" away free with some of their mega drive consoles. That this is all permitted shows that the state can accept violent fantasies and even any actual violence that springs from them. But on the other hand it will not allow people to train in weapons so that they become competent in using them (as in ninjutsu). This is because the police can cope OK with a small increase in the quantity of violence but could so easily be in hot water if the violence they are up against becomes more expert. How easily could the pigs defeat a riotous mob of real life "street ninjas"?

Earlier I talked about the isolation while actually playing the games. That isn't the whole story. The culture associated with the toys (eg feeling part of the in crowd, the specialist mags, etc) give an illusion of being in some kind of community. And in addition to this illusion a sense of community comes with the swapping and sharing of games cartridges amongst friends. But these feelings of being a part of something are ironic. The whole nature of the phenomenon; the isolation and passivity, the sexism and consumerism, the exclusion of people without the cash to buy the machines; all this works together to prevent the creation of a real community where people relate to each other as equals in a deep and non alienated way.





Hole-in-wall gang steals one-ton cash dispenser

By Christopher Lockwood

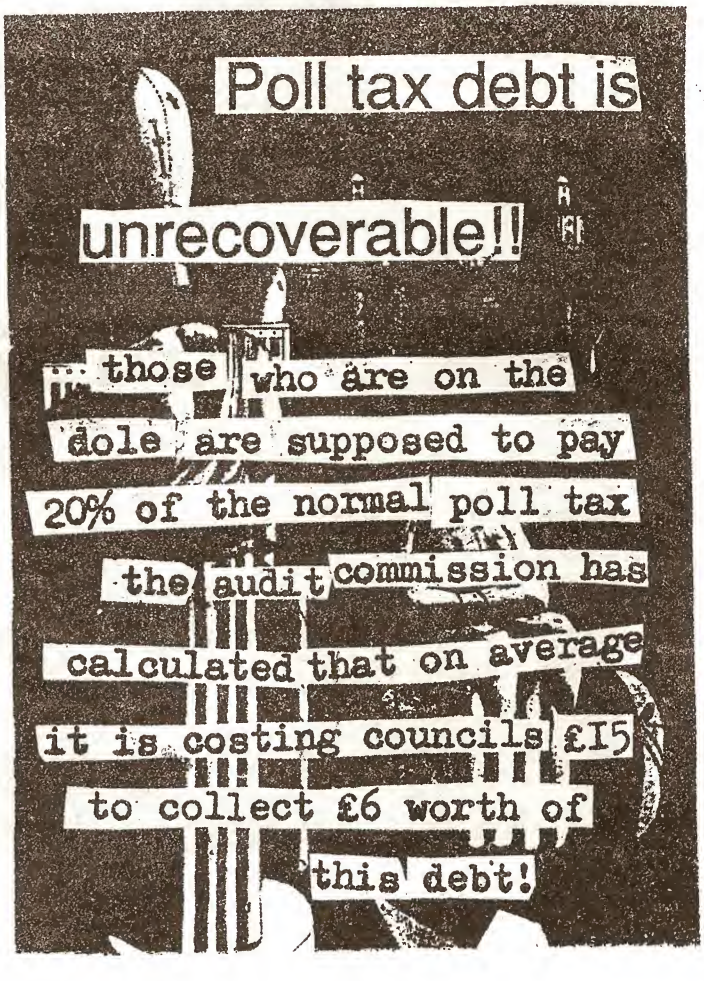
TWO men drove a bulldozer into the wall of a building society and stole a one-ton cash dispenser yesterday.

The robbery took place at 3.30am at the Abbey National branch in West Norwood, south-east London.

Using a JCB bulldozer stolen several weeks ago from a building site in Beddington, the thieves demolished much of the front wall and then used the machine's hydraulic platform to lift two cash machines from the wreckage.

One was lifted into a blue-and-white getaway truck, but witnesses, aroused by the noise, saw the bulldozer's driver abandon the second after failing to manoeuvre it on to the vehicle.

Police yesterday said both men seen by witnesses were white, stockily built and about 5ft 10in, with short dark hair.



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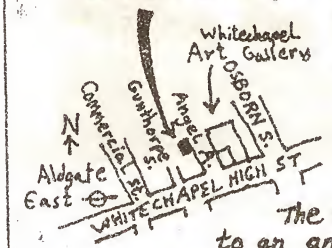

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